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a tribal culture, and the area of cultural unity reveals itself in some respects as coextensive with the tribe.

This is not merely an enumeration of isolated 'traits' selected at random. Each cultural factor which we reviewed affects, and is interdependent with, a wide range of other cultural factors. Culture, as anthropologists are realizing, is not a sum total of discrete traits; it possesses a definite structure and identity; its traits or elements, interdependent and mutually determined, build up a 'pattern' that tends towards coherence and consistency. This consistency—a functional consistency—reveals its existence to the student of the society in those cultural characteristics which he learns to regard as 'typical' or 'non-typical' of a culture. Each of the three cultural units which we enumerated shows, in some measure, the features of this consistency and identity. We will not here probe deeper into the nature of this consistency which seems to crystallize in different degrees of intensity and comprehensiveness. But we must clarify our concept of culture. So far, we have used the word in a rather vague sense. It is not the same culture, the same category of culture, which we discovered in these three relations between cultural and tribal unit. Cultural unity is, speaking generally, unity and correspondence in forms of social behaviour. When speaking of culture units wider than the unit of the tribe, we referred to a correspondence of behaviour among disconnected groups which we as students of cultures and peoples discover, classify, and name; it is a correspondence upheld by the unconscious processes involved in tradition and the perpetuation of custom; it impresses upon the groups a certain external *uniformity*. When speaking of the smaller cultural units which reflect common environmental conditions and common interests, common spheres, that is, of organized social life, we refer to something that goes beyond an externally visible uniformity. We mean a *conformity* of behaviour, a conscious unity created by, and embodied in, a common group life and the mutual control and adjustment of behaviour among the people who form the group.[1] The identification of cultural group and tribe implies, in the observer's interpretation, something of both.

But were this all it would enable us only to define the tribe as a natural species is defined—unknown to the subject of the definition. It would amount to colouring a certain space on a cultural map and calling it 'Nupe tribal culture'. It would not explain the crucial point in our argument, that the people are themselves conscious of the reality of the tribe. But culture has also another, new, meaning: it represents the conception of the people themselves. To the Nupe the tribe possesses a certain culture, specific to it and only to it, irrespective of variations within or similarities with groups without the tribal boundaries. Their awareness of this unity is expressed in the form of almost axiomatic statements, 'the Nupe do this or that', 'this and that is a Nupe custom',

[1] The historian may attempt to link the two, and derive 'uniformity' from an original 'conformity', that is, explain the present cultural correspondence among disconnected groups by cultural diffusion from a centre in which culture was identical with organised common life. But considerations of this kind remain outside this discussion.

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contrasting Nupe usages with customs and forms of behaviour characteristic of other tribes. You discuss, for example, the worship of human figures and idols of the kind you see in every village and every house in neighbouring Yoruba; or the face-like masks which the Yoruba and many southern tribes wear in their ritual dances; or perhaps the ceremony of spirit possession which the Hausa who live in Bida town perform on Bida market. Your Nupe informant will tell you positively: no—we have none of this; only Yoruba do it, or Hausa do it, as the case may be. Or you ask a Nupe man what all Nupe have in common. He will, as a rule, enumerate the same few traits. All Nupe, he will say, have the *ena gbarifuši* (age-grade associations), all Nupe have the same system of *tici* (ranks), and all Nupe have the *gunnu* cult. Of the Nupe community in Lagos, a group which has forgotten its traditions and abandoned its language, I was told that they were still Nupe, because they still practised the Nupe *kuti* (ritual) of the *ndakó gboyá* (a ritual closely linked with the *gunnu*). Yet on closer examination this shibboleth of Nupedom proves only half true. Worship of idols and human figures exists also among the Nupe, in the riverain area; mask dances with face-masks are practised in a large section of the Nupe, in Mokwa and the neighbouring villages. The age-grade associations are common both to Nupe and Hausa. The rank system is common all over Northern Nigeria, but the details in its organization (very significant details) vary considerably among different groups of the Nupe. The *gunnu* cult exists also among Gbari, Gara, Basa Kom, and, what is more important, appears in Nupe itself in strikingly different forms in different parts of the country.[1] Finally, as regards the Nupe colonies outside Nupe country: I have visited the Nupe communities in Lagos and Ibadan. They are descendants of Nupe slaves and serfs, completely Yoruba-ized to-day in language, custom, and everyday habits. It is true they have the *ndakó gboyá* (which they call by the Yoruba name *igunnu*). But the *ndakó gboyá* is completely absent among the eastern section of Nupe, the Dibo, and also, I believe, among most groups of the Ebe, the northern section of the Nupe tribe.

Objectively, then, the rigid distinction of Nupe and non-Nupe on the basis of cultural characteristics often proves incorrect, and must do so, since culture is both wider and narrower than the tribe. True, there exist certain traits, or 'patterns' of traits, which are typical of all the Nupe, and possibly only of the Nupe—facts of material culture, social organization, religious beliefs. Like the Nupe who mean to uphold the identity of their tribe, I shall speak of things 'the Nupe do' or 'do not do'. True it is that the people admit the existence of certain cultural variants which qualify the cultural unity of the tribe. But the essential fact to us here is not the objective constellation of cultural traits. The identification of Nupe tribe with a core of Nupe culture represents a concept, a spiritual reality, rather than a critical interpretation of cultural facts. It reflects not the quasi-scientific calculation of more essential against less essential traits, or of a majority of common characteristics as against a minority of

[1] See *J.R.A.I.* lxvii, 1937, pp. 91–130.

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dissimilarities, but a phenomenon of a different order, a theory and ideology which ignores divergences *ex definitione*. It represents, in one word, the theory of the Nupe tribe. Our tautological definition of tribe then reads thus: a tribe or people is a group the members of which claim unity on the grounds of their conception of a specific common culture.[1]

To define the unity as conceptual does not make it less real or less significant. The awareness of unity is the basic element in all social unity. Consciousness of commonness is the primary element in social commonness. 'Communities, for all their external marks, are not objective things, they are spiritual realities.'[2] The tribe is not a community in the strict sense of the word: it lacks, as we have seen, the element of 'common life' and co-activity. But communities exist in different degrees of intensity; they have a different compass of social inclusiveness; there is not *one* community, but a complex hierarchy of communities.[3] The consciousness of a uniform culture defines the widest, loosest unit in the hierarchy of communities—potential rather than actual 'common life'. One turns easily into the other. 'One of the great processes of society . . . is that thereby the common is built out of the like, common interests growing out of what were at first merely like interests.'[4] We add that the consciousness of uniformity is the first step towards conformity of culture.

At the same time this uniformity of conduct which is conscious of itself is more than merely a potential stage of social existence. It represents, in itself, a specific social reality. Let me define here a vital concept of social existence which will occur throughout this book: social integration. The essence of integration is co-activity—potential or actual; social integration is predictable co-adaptation of behaviour in a group. It reveals itself in the certainty with which, in the group, certain actions of individuals or group sections will call forth appropriate response actions of other individuals or group sections. Now uniformity of behaviour is, sociologically, meaningless. Conscious uniformity, however, is predictable uniformity; the knowledge that a certain familiar pattern of activity will be repeated endlessly throughout the group represents a first form, and a degree at the same time, of social integration.

These two types of integration, uniformity and conformity, do not exhaust the forms of unity of behaviour existing in society. We shall meet in this analysis also with a third interpretation of cultural commonness or likeness, namely, the co-adaptation of behaviour involved in all organized associations. We shall speak of it as *co-ordination* of behaviour, for it represents essentially a planned, controlled organization of behaviour in the group, regulated and enforced by specific social mechanisms. In

[1] This definition claims to hold true for all large tribal groups ('peoples') of a similarly complex structure. It does not apply to smaller and more homogeneous groups. The factor of size and numbers is of importance. Evidently, for a small group on a Pacific Island tribe equals local group; or among American Indian tribes the tribal unit may coincide with the political group (see A. L. Kroeber, *Anthropology*, 1923, p. 232).

[2] R. M. MacIver, *Society*, p. 66. [3] Ibid., p. 10; *Community*, p. 23.

[4] R. M. MacIver, *Society*, p. 8.

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little trace of awe or emotional thrill.[1] But there is no conception of consuming things sacred in themselves and hence of sharing bodily a token of divinity. The crucial aspect of the sacrificial meal lies in the fact that here God and his worshippers eat and drink together; and if this is a symbolic act, its symbolism merely points to, and confirms, the 'fellowship and mutual social obligations' between deity and congregation. Much the same point was made by Robertson Smith in his discussion of the ancient semitic sacrifice, and I can do no better than quote from him: 'The one thing directly expressed in the sacrificial meal is that the god and his worshippers are *commensals*, but every other point in their mutual relations is included in what this involves. Those who sit at meat together are united for all social effects; those who do not eat together are aliens to one another, without fellowship in religion and without reciprocal social duties'.[2]

Here we are no longer dealing with symbols in the strict sense of the word but with a new type of significance, bearing on things of very general social import and established by means of a relevant parallelism between the form of ritual and the norms governing social relationships. Before turning to this aspect let me mention another border zone of symbolism in ritual, where the symbolic function of modes of acting overlaps with their direct, causal, efficacy. The modes of acting, in other words, both 'point to' a state of affairs relevant to the aims of the ritual, and also cause this state of affairs to materialize. The instance I have in mind is the sexual taboo of the *gunnu*, followed by a period of licence. The fact that normal sexual relations are first suspended and afterwards conspicuously resumed must clearly focus attention upon sex and procreation, and upon the sequence of 'end' and 'new beginning'; so that this rule of acting comes to symbolize the central theme of the cult. Equally, however, the prohibition, rendered more severe by the provocation of the 'mixed dance', and its subsequent lifting produce both tensions and catharsis, and generally add to the stimulations generated in the ritual: and in this sense they simply engineer or create the required mood and expectations.

Generally speaking, then, strict (and comprehended) symbolism plays no great part in Nupe ceremonial. In a different sense, however, all ceremonials operate with modes of acting which 'point beyond themselves' in a manner analogous to signs or symbols. They no longer serve merely as 'reminders', nor do they bear upon

[1] This is borne out by the usual translation of the Nupe word *bìkí* into Hausa-Arabic; using the latter phraseology the Nupe would speak of *walima*, 'sacred feast'.

[2] *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 1907, p. 269.

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or underline only the professed aims of the ritual; rather do they express additional aims in an implicit and incidental fashion. Consider that the ritual procedure acknowledges distinctions of rank and seniority (for example, in the order in which the congregation is seated and receives food and drink); that it draws a sharp line between those admitted to the esoteric ceremonials or to the ceremonial altogether (certain age sets, men, members of the community), and those excluded from it (other age sets, women, strangers). Again, among the youths admitted to the esoteric rite there are the novices and those already initiated, each group being expected to behave differently, to show fear or not, to teach or to be taught, and so forth. Among the women who may join the public phase the girls might have to keep apart from the old women, as in the *dzahó* dance. Both in the *gunnu* and *mamma* the leader of the age grades assumes the special duty of supervising and organizing the youths. And in all larger ceremonies there is some procession through the village, when one 'salutes' the houses of chiefs and elders.

Now all these instances refer to behaviour valid and meant to be valid also in everyday life. If, then, respect towards elders, awareness of one's place in the society, the very notion of being of it, are given expression in the ritual procedure, this comes to demonstrate, in the manner of a model, the obtaining social norms. Needless to say, it is a very special model since it is presented in the context of stirred-up emotions and to a consciousness artificially heightened. Rarely is this model also explained in so many words; nor does it seem necessary: the norms of ritual behaviour simply parallel or duplicate the norms of 'real' life in a conspicuous manner, the ritual mobilising the group as it should normally function. And since this 'normality' is an aimed-at state and represents goals or values governing secular life, we may here speak of aims or functions super-added to the professed aims of the ritual, or, with Radcliffe-Brown, of 'social values' rendered visible in the ritual. The important thing is that they are rendered visible *incidentally*, being implicit in the procedure of a ritual overtly directed towards quite other aims. In other words, the form of the ritual adds to its content, and this tends to be cumulative, absorbing a variety of aims.

Yet though these represent ways of acting generally desirable and important in social life, the ritual, in virtue of its professed aims, has its own importance. So that one importance is sustained or thrown into relief by the other. This circle is true of most or all religious rituals. But let us note two things. The additional aims conveyed in the ritual need not be merely implicit in its procedure; they may equally be made explicit by formal pronouncements

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occurring in the course of the ceremonial. In Nupe, this is the case only in the *gunnu*. We remember the exclusion of barren women from the public celebrations: this attitude is not merely left to emerge from the procedural rules but is also laid down in the form of an explicit warning voiced by the *gunnu* priest. Similarly the general obligation of respect towards elders and, especially, of sons towards their fathers is put into words, during the vigil in the bush, when the *ndakó gboyá* catechises the adolescents. Thus the Nupe can rightly say (in one of the *gunnu* songs) that the '*gunnu* teaches men', though in a more indirect fashion this would be true of all their rituals.

Furthermore, the 'desirable and important ways of acting' demonstrated in the ritual, implicitly or explicitly, may be held up as desirable and important in the ritual alone, not having the same weight in everyday life or not appearing in it at all. The ritual would then present, not a duplication or model, but something else—an ideal rarely met with in practice or even a reversal of the practice. This is true in varying degree of four features of the Nupe ritual, all concerned with the relationship of the sexes. There is, first, the rigid exclusion of women from the esoteric rites, which sometimes goes together with intimidation and threats. Yet women play an important part in Nupe social life, in many ways equal to that of the men; many women are influential and wealthy, and ranks and titles are open to them.[1] In no sense are they the 'weaker' or more timid sex. If, then, it is 'important' in the ritual that women should be kept in their place and forcibly reminded of their inferiority, this seems to imply a redress of balance, a compensation for the loss of male prominence, and something in the nature of a wish-fulfilment. The issue seems conspicuously summarized in the *mamma* ritual, which admits the power of women (since the 'medicine' employed is a woman's gift) yet is also meant to subdue and terrify them. The sex antagonism here apparent has a much wider bearing and will occupy us again in the discussion of witchcraft.

Secondly, the ostracism of the childless woman in the *gunnu*, though it does not contradict the norms valid in 'real' life, greatly exaggerates them. The Nupe men will always moralize about the impropriety of contraception and the shameful conduct of mothers who behave as though they had no children, becoming professional traders and, incidentally, prostitutes; equally, everybody will decry the misfortune of barrenness. But the fact remains that a great many women, childless or not, happily live in this 'shameful' state and are able to choose it without necessarily incurring the

[1] For a fuller account of the position of the women, especially in the economic sphere, see *A Black Byzantium*, chap. IX.

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risk of divorce or even of their husbands' serious anger. The ritual alone seriously and publicly brands immorality or subjects barren women to a 'cure' which is indistinguishable from punishment.

Thirdly, the hectic mood of the *gunnu* dance is a model 'in reverse'. For this kind of abandoned behaviour is never permitted or thought of in ordinary life, and any open reference to sex is severely shunned by the rather prudish Nupe. Sex and privacy go together; and no ordinary dance permits a mingling of the sexes. Indeed, in all ordinary dances and in most ceremonial ones the whole mood is one of calm and restraint. Perhaps, then, we may call the *gunnu* (and one or two similar ceremonials) a safety-valve, a licensed compensation for otherwise rigid self-control; certainly, it puts a premium on a mode of behaviour otherwise not only improper but unthinkable.

The final instance, again taken from the *gunnu*, is of a slightly different order. I am referring to the masquerading of the boys as girls. 'Masquerading' is possibly too strong a word, for all that happens is that the boys wear a piece of woman's cloth.[1] But this aspect of the *gunnu* dress is always specifically mentioned, and in the general dance the boys are encouraged to imitate and caricature female steps and mannerisms. Now in 'real' life boys or men are never expected to behave like the opposite sex. From the time when children put on any dress at all (when they are about six or seven), they are dressed differently. As soon as the boys form themselves into the earliest age grade (at the age of eight or nine), the occupations, interests, and codes of conduct of the sexes differ sharply, and this is true also of songs, dances, and pastimes of all kinds. Male homosexuality, which would blur this dividing line, is severely condemned and, in fact, denied to occur. The exceptional behaviour at the *gunnu* thus appears to have a symbolic significance (though it is not stated more explicitly), the temporary change of roles pointing to a more permanent one. The boys who are admitted to the *gunnu* are on the threshold of manhood, the very admission to the ritual being a first token of the new status. Before that they were something else—children, still looked after by their mothers as much as by their fathers, and being with women more often than with men. Later, this ambiguous position will come to an end, which change roughly coincides with admission to the *gunnu*. The symbolic identification with the female sex on that occasion thus emphasizes the transition through concentrating it into something like 'a last time' when boys can be confused with girls. It is not literally a 'last time'; for even before this event boys did not walk about dressed like girls or behaved

[1] In the *gani* ceremonial, to be described later, this 'masquerading' is much more elaborate and definite (see below, p. 218).

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like them; and after the first admission to the *gunnu* there will be repetitions of the same ceremonial and masquerade. The *gunnu* thus exaggerates the change of roles and presents it in a manner not exactly true to life; but just because it does so it becomes a means of dramatizing a crucial crisis of life which, in reality, is neither as conspicuous nor as dramatic. So that the *gunnu*, through this part of its procedure, assumes the relevance of a *rite de passage*.

To summarize. By its professed content, the ritual applies and partly affirms the system of religious ideas; and by its form, it becomes part of the machinery which maintains the efficient working of a society of a given structure. By its form, too, the ritual 'accumulates' further aims and ideas, bearing on codes of conduct, on social roles, and hence on the values of 'good' and 'bad'. Surveying all the various Nupe rituals we find that the *gunnu*, as it is considered the paramount ritual, so it is also the richest in 'cumulative' content. There is practically no manner of acting which is not referred to and evaluated in its procedure; furthermore, the *gunnu* alone goes beyond implicit references and contains also express pronouncements upon these 'additional' aims.

As I previously tried to show, it is not paradoxical that a cult of such far-reaching importance should be the first to disappear or to be truncated under the pressure of change; rather, its very ambitiousness exposes it 'on too many sides' to disruptive influences. Let me rephrase this assertion in terms of the 'content' and 'form' of rituals. The disappearance or radical alteration of the ritual clearly implies some weakening of its appeal. The professed content of the ritual would lose its appeal only if the whole conceptual framework of the religion were disrupted, as it would be by the impact of another religion, in this case Islam. Yet this was certainly not true (or not yet true) of the many Nupe communities where the *gunnu* alone of all the various rituals had disappeared or broken down. The form of the ritual, however, since it absorbs so many of the general norms of social life, would be weakened by any change affecting the latter, by any remodelling of the relationship between the generations, by any new attractions seducing the younger people, and by all changes in moral or educational standards. It is precisely dislocations of this kind which have spread most widely through Nupe country; and it is thus the *gunnu* carrying within its 'form' a mirror of the traditional way of life, lost its appeal and indeed its very relevance as its picture ceased to be true.

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education. Let me make it clear that the mother is always expected to do the best for her children, and to pamper them in small matters, by giving them sweets, tasty tit-bits, and occasional presents. Nor is her more consequential economic help strictly unexpected and against the rule: but it is a rule of *faute de mieux*, whose coming into play inevitably connotes the failure of the more basic rule, that it is the father's role to meet the economic requirements of the household. Here, as in the instance mentioned before, the economic independence of the women connotes the inadequacy of the men.

There is a further point, already touched upon in a previous context. In Nupe, the women traders are proverbially 'bad' wives and 'bad' women, that is, women of loose and immoral character. Going on long journeys as they regularly do, they neglect their household duties and, while away from home, live the life of prostitutes. This is true even of the many women who only visit the market in the town, the Bida night market being a recognized place of assignation. All this is bad enough in the case of childless women; but in their case such immoral conduct is condoned, if with a shrug of the shoulders. As proverbial, however, as the moral laxity of the women traders is their desire to avoid having children. It is they who are the most regular customers of the various dealers in 'contraceptives'. They thus pile one iniquity upon another, having chosen not only unchastity but that utterly unnatural and despicable thing, voluntary barrenness.

Whether the woman exceeds the proper role of a wife and mother or rejects it, in part or entirely, she has successfully set aside a believed-in social norm. Now, this is no longer an instance of social abnormality, rather the opposite, if by 'normality' we mean all that is common, usual, expected: but it is a normality one hates and regrets, and contrasts with a desired state of affairs unhappily uncommon. This is borne out in every conversation; in the many quarrels between husbands and wives; in the many divorces and separations (and equally in the resigned attitude of husbands); in the comments of the medicine experts which we quoted before; in nostalgic talks of the men about a happier past when 'women knew their place'; and in the exclusion of unchaste and childless women from religious ceremonials.

This, then, is a clash between ideal and reality. But it is in no sense seen as fortuitous or transitory, as the result of some unfortunate maladjustment which could have been avoided and can conceivably be set right if one only made the effort. The harking-back to 'the good old days' is merely an escape from a reality which one is helpless to alter. For no one speaks about a future when everything should be better than it is now; and though the

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impact of alien influences and the vast increase in trade and traffic in the last few decades may well have aggravated the situation, all the available evidence (of genealogies and life histories) proves that the morals of women and the fate of marriages were, for the last four or five generations at least, much what they are today. Nor is this harking-back more than half-hearted; no one would claim that there was a time when all women were chaste and submissive, when they did not trade and earn money, and when contraceptive practices were unknown. Indeed such a claim, were it ever made, would be belied by the character of the *gunnu* ritual and by various legends and stories. Briefly, for the people the ideal was always out of step with the reality; so that we must judge this conflict to be inherent in the make-up of the society, whose economic system (which has certain moral consequences) is as unquestioned as are its ethical conceptions (which condemn these consequences).

This is important: for it is the inescapable nature of the conflict which finds expression in the belief in women witches. Nupe society, forced into an ambivalent attitude towards the role of women, which it cannot but accept and cannot but hate and call evil, also ascribes to them the powers of witchcraft. The coincidence as such is a matter of observed fact. But we can go further, and interpolate the psychological mechanism which turns the coincidence into a causal nexus, and hence enables us to call one thing the 'cause' and the other the 'symptom'. The mechanism is familiar: it lies in the projection of internal conflicts and of the frustrations so caused upon an external agent, real or imaginary. In our case, the awareness of an ideal state disturbed fastens upon the successful disturber; the helplessness in the face of a threatening situation turns into the positive fear of persons; and while one is incapable of dealing with the situation, one can at least deal with concrete individuals, whom one can accuse, persecute, and punish. So that in being made the witches of the society, the women are made to carry its fault or failure.

It is clear that this explanation holds good only on the assumption that the beliefs in witchcraft have been fashioned by men; for on almost every point we argued from a male standpoint. The legitimacy of this assumption need hardly be defended. The assertion of mundane morality, through legal institutions, falls to the men exclusively; above all, Nupe religion, its practices and doctrine, are fundamentally a male concern; and as it is the men who know and speculate about religion and have charge of the transmission of religious knowledge, so the notions of witchcraft must have been their creation. Situations of this kind are of course common; a great many societies are in this sense men-made and men-run; and if, like Nupe, they also afford considerable initiative and import-